Met Office

December 2012

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

The month began generally unsettled with wintry showers bringing some snow to the north and east of the UK, particularly over higher ground. A brief change to anti-cyclonic conditions then brought some colder frostier conditions. The second half of the month was mild but very unsettled again as a sequence of Atlantic fronts brought persistent heavy rain at times. On 14th and 15th, rain and high winds caused disruption in some coastal areas of southern England and eastern Scotland, and there were further heavy rain events and widespread flooding problems in the run-up to Christmas.

The UK mean temperature was 3.9 °C, which is equal to the 1981-2010 average, although the first part of the month was generally colder than average and the second half generally warmer. Northern Scotland was slightly colder than average and south-west England slightly warmer. Rainfall totals for the UK overall were 149% of the long-term average, making it the wettest December since 1999 and the 8th wettest in the series back to 1910. The UK sunshine figure for the month was 113% of average.

A maximum temperature of 15.0 °C was recorded at Westonzoyland (Somerset) on the 22nd and Achfary (Sutherland) on the 28th. A minimum temperature of -12.9 °C was recorded at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) on the 6th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on the 21st, 107.6 mm of rain fell at Glen Finglas (Perthshire). Wind gusts of 79 mph were recorded at Capel Curig (Gwynedd) on the 28th and Uist (Outer Hebrides) on the 29th. A snow depth of 20 cm was observed at Fettercairn (Kincardineshire) at 0900 on the 6th.

Weather impacts

Thick fog, freezing fog, and ice caused some hazardous conditions and travel disruption in parts of the country during the first half of the month. A number of flights out of London airports were cancelled on the 12th.

A combination of rain, wind, and high tides resulted in coastal flooding on the 14th/15th for south-west England and Scotland. 30 properties were reported flooded in Looe (Cornwall), while around 60 people were evacuated in north-west Scotland. A section of the harbour wall collapsed in Lossiemouth.

Further rain, on already saturated ground, caused significant disruption in the latter part of the month with flood warnings issued and defences raised across the UK. Roads were closed due to flooding in Scotland on 20th, six villages in Cornwall were flooded, and 80 homes in Wellington (Somerset) were evacuated. Roads and railway lines were also affected in parts of the country. The wet weather continued over the Christmas holiday period, causing disruption to both road and rail travel. On the 22nd, rail operators were advising people not to attempt to travel to parts of south-west England beyond Taunton (Somerset) due to flooding, and trains were also not running between Cardiff and Swansea in south Wales. In Braunton (north Devon) the river Caen burst its banks, flooding homes and shops in the town. A number of homes were evacuated due to landslips in Ystalyfera and Pontypridd in south Wales. The Thames barrier was raised on the 27th to reduce the risk of the high tide exacerbating flood risk on the Thames.

England diary of highlights

A succession of low pressure systems through the month gave rain which for many areas was often persistent and heavy, and fell on already saturated ground. Temperatures were significantly below average in the first half

of the month, but above average in the second half. There were however some fine, sunny days in the first half of the month.

The mean temperature was 0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was the wettest December since 1978, and rainfall totals were above average across all regions with 171% of average for England as a whole. The early part of the month in particular contributed to it also being a relatively sunny month, with 119% of average sunshine hours.

1st to 9th:

The month began rather unsettled and showery, with occasional bands of rain. There was some sleet and snow at times, mainly over hills, but occasionally to lower levels too. On 3rd a band of rain moved across the country, turning to sleet and snow as it met colder air to the north and east, particularly over higher ground. Temperatures struggled to reach seasonal normal values, and there were a number of frosts. There was no particularly notable heavy rainfall.

10th to 13th:

Pressure built, and there were then a few days of quiet anticyclonic weather, allowing the first really severe frosts of the season. 10th was bright and sunny for most, with the exception of light wintry showers in the east. Overnight fog was often slow to clear during the day and caused some travel problems. A few wintry showers continued to affect eastern coastal areas. By 13th cloud and milder conditions reached the far south-west.

14th to 15th:

An extensive low-pressure area brought fronts across the UK, giving heavy rain across all districts, and bringing temperatures back to near the seasonal average. The rain on 14th was also accompanied by strong winds, with winds reaching gale force in some exposed parts of the south coast, causing some localised coastal flooding.

16th to 24th:

England remained largely under the influence of a large area of low pressure in the north Atlantic. This brought a mainly westerly or south-westerly flow with very mild but exceptionally wet conditions. A sequence of active depressions brought heavy rainfall and flooding to many areas of the UK, especially where ground was already saturated. On 16th, after a dry and clear start to the night, some showers arrived later across parts of the Midlands, falling onto frozen surfaces with a risk of ice. The 17th was showery, and the south-east had the driest, sunniest weather. The 18th was largely dry, but turned cloudy and windy in the west by late afternoon. There was a particularly wet spell on 19th and 20th, with rain falling on already saturated ground, resulting in widespread flooding, although generally not as severe or widespread as that experienced in late November. The wet theme continued, with further localised flooding and disruption during 22nd to 24th. On 22nd 85.8 mm of rain fell at Kinsford Gate, Exmoor (Somerset) and a temperature of 15.0 °C was recorded at Westonzoyland (Somerset).

25th to 31st:

The unsettled theme continued, with bands of heavy rain interspersed with showers. Temperatures were largely close to or above average, with overnight frosts still very limited. Winds were strong, with gales at times, mainly for hills and coasts, especially in the north-west. A few of the showers were wintry in the north-west. Many areas were carpeted in showers on the morning of 25th, with the heaviest skirting the south-east of England, but the afternoon was drier for most. Scattered showers and spells of more persistent rain dominated the rest of the month. Rain made steady progress south-eastwards on 31st, with several hours of moderate

rain, and gale-force gusts at times in exposed sites. The evening of New Year's Eve was fine for most places, as the rain cleared away south-eastwards, though showers continued in some western areas.

Wales diary of highlights

A generally unsettled month of showers and longer periods of rainfall, with a brief spell of more settled and colder conditions from 10th to 13th.

The mean temperature was 0.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average for December. It was the wettest December since 1993 with 160% of average rainfall. Sunshine hours were 107% of average.

1st to 9th:

Unsettled, with periods of rain or showers, and temperatures close to the seasonal average. After a showery start, rain arrived overnight on 2nd, becoming heavy before it cleared away on 3rd. Heavy showers followed, with hail, thunder and lightning at times, also sleet over the highest ground. The showers gradually became less frequent and lighter during 5th, followed by a cold night with a widespread frost. Rain spread eastwards on 6th, along with windy conditions. Further showers followed on 7th, but died away overnight to leave isolated frost, mist and fog patches. The 8th was largely dry during daylight hours, with sunshine once any fog cleared. However rain arrived across north Wales by dusk, becoming more widespread overnight, albeit light. The cloud and patchy rain cleared during the day on 9th.

10th to 13th:

Higher pressure dominated this period, and it was more settled, with widespread overnight frosts, and daytime temperatures below the seasonal average. The minimum temperature was -3.5 °C at Trawscoed (Dyfed) on 10th, and -6.7 °C at Sennybridge (Powys) on 11th. Freezing fog developed during the night of 11th, mainly across east Wales, and was slow to clear during the day on 12th, which meant daytime temperatures struggled to rise above freezing in places. However, on 12th western parts of Wales had some spells of sunshine, with a maximum temperature of 6.4 °C at Milford Haven (Dyfed). The night of 12th was clearer, with less freezing fog, but again frosty, followed by a dry and bright day on 13th.

14th to 18th:

The 14th started cold and misty, with Capel Curig (Conwy) falling to -7.5 °C. Hill fog and patchy light rain in the morning were replaced by heavier rain and increasingly gusty winds. It turned clearer but milder later, with scattered showers through the evening and overnight. Over the next few days, showers continued, some heavy and thundery on 15th though fast-moving on a brisk south-westerly wind; some hail and thunder occurred on 16th, and lightning was reported in parts of South Wales on 17th. Temperatures remained close to the seasonal average, and winds eased by 17th. The 18th started cloudy, but brightened up with sunny spells developing, and a maximum temperature of 11.3 °C at Gogerddan (Dyfed), Trawscoed (Dyfed) and Cardiff, though high cloud spread from the west later on.

19th to 25th:

Cloudy to start on 19th, with rain arriving through the afternoon, becoming fairly persistent at times with some heavy bursts. The rain did not clear until the night of 20th, with accumulations of 15-25 mm by then. 21st was dry with some sunshine. Rain spread in by dawn on 22nd, becoming locally heavy, and persisted through the day, clearing away later in the night. Overall 50-75 mm of rain fell across south Wales, with still substantial amounts further north. It was also very mild and windy; a gust of 66 knots (76 mph) was recorded overnight at Aberdaron (Gwynedd). There was a temporary drier, cloudy and still mild spell of weather on 23rd, before further rain briefly returned from the south on 24th. Heavy, sometimes thundery, showers followed the rain later on Christmas Eve and continued during Christmas Day.

26th to 31st:

The month ended as it started, unsettled with showers or periods of rain. The rainfall was often heavy, with 11.6 mm in one hour at Whitechurch (Pembrokeshire) on 29th, and was also prolonged; in 24 hours to 0900 on 31st 80.4 mm fell at Capel Curig (Conwy). It was also very windy at times, but remained mild.

Scotland diary of highlights

The first half of the month was cold with wintry showers and some snow, especially across the mountains, followed by a brief settled spell from 10th to 13th. After 14th conditions were milder but very unsettled with rain and strong winds.

The mean temperature was 0.4 °C below the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall totals were above average with Scotland overall receiving 131%; it was particularly wet in the east, with Aberdeenshire recording over twice the normal December rainfall, and for Eastern Scotland this was the wettest December since 1929. Sunshine totals were close to average for Scotland overall.

1st to 9th:

Cold with rain or snow. It was cold on 1st, but mainly dry with light snow showers for northern areas, and temperatures widely struggled to reach 5 °C. The 2nd remained cold and bright, and dry until rain reached the far west in the evening, spreading east overnight. Snow fell on higher ground on 3rd, and western areas had rain showers. The 4th was wet for much of the Central Highlands and Aberdeenshire with snow in many areas, and 5th was another cold day with snow showers for north-eastern areas - Aviemore (Inverness-shire) and Tulloch Bridge (Perthshire) reported 6 cm snow-depth. After a widespread frost, Braemar (Aberdeenshire) falling to -12.9 °C, a band of rain (sleet and snow for higher ground) spread from the west on 6th, clearing eastwards during the afternoon. Another cold start on 7th, down to -7 °C in parts of the Highlands; snow showers affected north-eastern areas. A band of rain spread from the west before dawn on 8th, with some heavy bursts for Aberdeenshire. Southern areas were drier but cloudy. The 9th was cold and bright for many areas, but with snow showers in the far north.

10th to 13th:

Settled but cold. From 10th till 13th the days were generally dry, bright but cold as high pressure built. The temperature at Braemar fell to -12.5 °C early on the 13th.

14th to 31st:

Unsettled with rain or showers, and occasional snow for higher ground. Rain and strong winds spread from the west on the morning of 14th, reaching all areas by the end of the day, with Durris (Aberdeenshire) recording 43.1 mm. Severe gales for eastern coastal areas in the early hours of 15th, combined with high tides, caused extensive damage in some places. Showers were confined to north-western areas, and temperatures recovered to near the seasonal for the time of year. The 16th to 18th were generally dry but cloudy, apart from some scattered showers in north-eastern areas on 17th. After a dry start on 19th, a band of rain spread to western areas by early afternoon and reached all other areas by evening. The 20th was wet, with some heavy rain for central and eastern areas where Tyndrum (Perthshire) recorded 89.4 mm. The rain slowly edged eastwards on 21st, leaving drier conditions to the west. Another wet day on 22nd for many areas, especially in Aberdeenshire where Durris recorded 68.1 mm. Many areas were dull and wet again on 23rd, with the heaviest rain now in the north-west. A band of mainly patchy rain spread into the west on the morning of 24th, and continued slowly east during the afternoon. A band of rain spread into the north-west on 25th, although other areas were mainly dry but cloudy. Northern areas were mostly dry and bright on 26th, although a band of rain spread to the southern half of the country during the late afternoon with 27 mm recorded at Edinburgh Gogarbank. The 27th was dull and damp with rain for many areas, heaviest in the west. A band of rain

accompanied by strong winds spread from the south-west on 28th; Stornoway (Western Isles) recorded a gust of 72 mph and Achnagart (Highland) recorded 36.2 mm of rain. It remained unsettled and breezy on 29th with some heavy rain for northern areas where Achnagart recorded a further 34.0 mm. The 30th was showery, especially in the west where Tyndrum (Perthshire) recorded 55.4 mm, and only eastern coastal areas stayed dry. The showers fell as snow in northern areas. The 31st started with a band of rain, clearing east in early afternoon to leave showers mainly in the west.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Most of the month was unsettled with wintry showers and some strong winds, interspersed with sunnier spells. The first few days were cold and showery. Some drier and brighter conditions prevailed during 10th to 13th, before a return to showers and spells of more persistent rain for most of the rest of the month.

The mean temperature was 0.2 °C below the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall was somewhat above the long-term average with a total of 118% of average. Sunshine totals were above average with 134%.

1st to 5th:

Unsettled, with temperatures below average. The 1st was dry and bright for most, although some light showers affected northern coastal areas. A band of rain spread slowly from the west on 2nd, only reaching eastern areas later in the day. The 3rd was a day of sunshine and showers with northern and western areas worst affected and the east staying mainly dry. A band of showers spread from the north on the morning of 4th and cleared to leave a dry afternoon, but it felt cold in a northerly breeze. The 5th remained cold with some light scattered showers and temperatures struggling to reach 6 °C.

6th to 9th:

Feeling milder, though with some rain. The 6th was wet for much of the day as rain spread from the west. It was much drier and brighter on 7th and also feeling a bit milder. It was cloudy on 8th, with some patchy light rain in central areas. A band of showers spread from the north in the early hours of 9th before clearing during the morning to leave a bright and dry day.

10th to 13th:

Pressure building, so more settled but cold. High pressure built from 10th till 13th, and although the days were generally dry and sunny it remained cold with daytime temperatures struggling to reach 5 °C and night frosts for many areas. The temperature dropped to -6.1 °C at Katesbridge (Down) early on 12th.

14th to 31st:

Unsettled with rain or showers and some strong winds. The fine spell ended by 14th as rain and strong winds with milder air spread from the west during the morning. The 15th was generally drier and brighter, with only a few showers for western areas. On 16th, after a dry morning, a band of showers spread from the south-west. Some showers lingered during the morning of 17th, but the afternoon was generally dry and cloudy, as was 18th, with temperatures around average for the time of year. A wet start on 19th with rain and strong winds spreading from the west, but the rain cleared to leave a brighter afternoon. Wet on 20th, with the rain heaviest in Antrim. The 21st was dry but cloudy. A band of rain spread from the west during the early hours of 22nd, clearing during the afternoon. There were a few scattered showers in the west on 23rd, and the east was brighter. Another mainly cloudy day on 24th, with light scattered showers in the morning. The morning of 25th was dry but a band of showers spread from the north-west during the afternoon. It was dry and bright for much of 26th, although a band of rain, with some heavy bursts for western areas, spread from the south-west late in the afternoon. There was some light rain for northern coastal areas on the morning of 27th, which cleared to leave a dry and bright afternoon. The 28th was a day of strong south-west winds and patchy rain,

with Magilligan (Londonderry) recording a gust of 53 mph The winds eased on 29th, a generally dry day with average temperatures for the time of year. An unsettled day on 30th with strong westerly winds and showers or longer spells of rain for many areas. A band of rain cleared east on the morning of 31st to leave scattered showers for the afternoon.

Last updated: 27 November 2013

Met Office